

LAGREIN

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BACKGROUND

Lagrein (lah-grain) is an old variety that has been known in Trentino, in north-east Italy, since the 16th century. It is now mainly grown in Alto Adige and Trentino where varietal wines are permitted in local DOCs. Rosé wines are labelled 'Rosato' or 'Kretzer' and red wines as 'Lagrein', 'Lagrein Dunkel' or 'Lagrein Scuro'. It is also often blended with Schiava Grossa. Lagrein has an interesting family tree because DNA research has revealed that it is the progeny of Teroldego and an unknown variety, a sibling of Marzemino, a cousin of Shiraz and a grandchild of Pinot. Synonyms include Burgundi Lagrein, Lagrain, Lagrain Blauer, Lagrino and Lagroin. There were 717ha planted in Italy in 2010. It does not appear to be grown to any significant extent elsewhere in Italy or in the rest of Europe. There are at least 38 wine producers of Lagrein in Australia in regions ranging from cool to hot, an indication of the adaptability of this variety.

VITICULTURE

Budburst is mid-season to late and maturity is late. Vigour is moderate to high with a semi-erect growth habit. Bunches are medium and well-filled with medium thick-skinned berries. Yield is usually moderate. Cane pruning is mainly used in Italy but spur pruning has also been used in Australia. Lagrein has low susceptibility to downy and powdery mildews and to botrytis bunch rot; however, it is prone to poor fruitset in some seasons. Lagrein vineyards in Australia appear to be comprised of just two clones, imported from California in the late 1960s.

WINE

Lagrein requires a warm site to ripen adequately. It needs to be sufficiently ripe to avoid green characters and bitterness. Wines have good colour, are medium to full bodied with round tannins, rich and concentrated with good persistence and generous flavour. Acid retention is good in hot climates. Descriptors include plum, blackberries, dark cherries, violet, chocolate and chalky tannins. Wines are less savoury than many other Italian red wine varieties. Lagrein is also good for rosé-style wines which can have elegant strawberry and floral characters. Excellent wines are possible in hot regions. Consumer appeal in Australia has been very good.

For further information on this and other emerging varieties, contact Marcel Essling (marcel.essling@awri.com.au or 08 8313 6600) at The Australian Wine Research Institute to arrange the presentation of the Alternative Varieties Research to Practice program in your region.